


# Newsletter

Winter /78 Vol. 4 #2

Blissymbolics  
Communication  
Foundation







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BLISSYMBOLICS COMMUNICATION FOUNDATION

Executive Director  
Director, Programme Development  
Director, Programme Implementation

Harry Silverman  
Shirley McNaughton  
Juanne Hemsol

The purpose of this Newsletter is to publish articles and news items concerning Blissymbolics which utilizes visual symbols as an augmentative to communication. The many applications of Blissymbolics include the following:

1. Communication Difficulties
2. Cognitive and Language Development
3. Reading
4. International Communication

SUBSCRIPTIONS

\$ 6.00 per annum. Available from:

Blissymbolics Communication Foundation  
862 Eglinton Avenue East  
Toronto, Ontario  
Canada M4G 2L1

ARTICLES:

Readers are encouraged to contribute articles in order to share their symbol experiences.  
Send to:

B.C.F. Newsletter  
c/o Mrs. Barbara Rush, Editor  
64 Magnolia Drive  
Hamilton, Ontario  
Canada L9C 5T2

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EDITORIAL

Our Winter issue has a West Coast flavour as many of the articles have been supplied by Margaret McCuaig, Director of the Vancouver Resource Centre. She has obtained information from various settings in beautiful B.C., which I think you will find most interesting.

Lynda Dunal is an occupational therapist at Pearson Hospital, Vancouver, and has written of her experiences with one adult symbol user. A programme for extended care patients residing in the Banfield Pavillion at Vancouver General Hospital is described by Mona Frederickson. Woodlands is a home for the physically handicapped and is having some success with Blissymbols as detailed by S. Bolding.

It is gratifying to note the expansion of Blissymbols into the field of alternative communication for stroke patients. Terry Ryan, a speech therapist at Gorge Road Hospital in Victoria, relates some of the problems involved in introducing such a programme.

Interest in Blissymbols in the United Kingdom has reached the point where they have had to publish their own Newsletter for U.K. distribution. We will be sharing articles with them from time to time and are happy to include in this issue thoughts from Jill Hammond on her experiences to date. Many of us had the pleasure of meeting Jill and some of her colleagues during their visit to Canada last year. Jill was able to travel by means of a Churchill Fellowship and has kindly written another piece describing this venture.

Teachers will be pleased to read the two articles concerning the use of Blissymbols in the reading process. We are grateful to Helen Marshall, a Vancouver teacher, and Dr. J.C. MacDougall of Montreal's McKay Centre for submitting these articles.

Shirley McNaughton has come up with another amazing use for Blissymbols. She has sent us two letters written by young Kari Harrington (Kari is rapidly becoming a Newsletter fixture!) following her exposure to a French symbol board. Mr. Trudeau would be proud of you, Shirley! Now, if we can get a non-verbal English-Canadian to learn French, what does that tell the rest of us? French symbol boards are used extensively in Quebec and we do have a number of French-speaking subscribers to this Newsletter. For that reason, we are happy that Keila Waksvik and Ron Levy submitted both English and French versions of their article concerning the optical pointer now being developed by them. Articles in French are always welcome.

Six Resource Centres now exist in Canada - Calgary, Ottawa, Montreal, Toronto, Sarnia, and Vancouver - and one each in Britain and Sweden. Interesting reading is provided by Margaret McCuaig's comments on the founding of the Vancouver Resource Centre. We are indebted to Margaret for two further submissions, one concerning Mr. Bliss' visit to Vancouver, and the other a postscript to Margaret Perry's article outlining the Technical Aids Program of the Kinsmen Rehabilitation Foundation.

News from the State of Washington is provided by Sandra Gorohoff, a speech therapist in private practice. This submission is brief, interesting and informative. We welcome paragraphs of this nature as well as full-length features, and ask that other subscribers write to tell us of happenings in their areas.

Integration of symbol users into the regular school system is becoming a major concern now that many young students have mastered the system to the extent that special class instruction is no longer required. Dale Sutherland voices her concerns in a thought-provoking article and asks for advice from those who have dealt with this issue.



From Regina comes a heart-warming story about one little girl's temporary rejection of symbol communication. Her teacher, Joan Hambly, writes to tell us how an article in the Reader's Digest sparked new interest. The final article proves that politics aside, good things still flow from Ottawa. Thanks go to Anne Warrick for her excellent and practical suggestions.

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Should you be interested in a particular article and wish to correspond with the author, please remember that you may do so by addressing your enquiry to the author c/o the B.C.F. in Toronto.

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A French workshop is to be held in Montreal. Le Centre De Ressources des Symboles Bliss à Montreal présente un atelier Bliss pour débutants les 7, 8, 9, 10, mars 1978. Endroit - Centre MacKay, 3500 Décarie, Montréal, P.Q.

Voici quelques uns des sujets traités lors de cet atelier:

- Historique de l'application des symboles Bliss
- Le système de symboles
- Considérations préalables à l'utilisation des symboles
- Communication avec un individu utilisant le système Bliss
- Implication de la famille
- Application des symboles auprès d'enfants retardés

Pour de plus amples informations, écrire à Atelier Bliss, A/s Monique Germain-Boucher, C.P. 444, Prévost, P.Q., JOR ITO

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The following English workshops will be held in Toronto:

Elementary	March 6-10, July 10-14, September 25-29
Advanced	April 3-5, July 24-26, October 16-18
Presentors	April 6-8, July 27-29, October 19-21
Special Interest	Symbols and the Adult - March 13-15
	Symbols and the Preschooler - August 14-16

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Extract from letter received from Kathy Gunn, London, England.

"I had hoped to have an article ready for you but I seem to have been too busy teaching Bliss to the United Nations in my University Hall of Residence!

I have just had my application for starting work on a M.Phil. degree approved by London University and will, of course, be working with Blissymbolics. In order to get some sort of possibility for a detailed research project on paper, I am looking for ideas as to what people feel they need most for symbol output from users of all ages and at all stages. My own thinking has moved towards something in the assessment area - perhaps eventually building an assessment programme. I know that Shirley McNaughton feels this could be useful. If any of your readers have suggestions to offer, I would be most grateful to hear from them. Any research results will automatically be made available to the B.C.F."



If you have ideas for Kathy, please submit them to her c/o B.C.F. Toronto.

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A new opportunity is being made available to symbol users in the Toronto area. The Hustler Young Men's Bible Class is offering Sunday School classes for symbol children. The Hustlers are non-denominational and meet every Sunday afternoon in Grace Carman United Church, 1155 College Street, Toronto, from September through May. One of their members, Don Seaton, writes, "As a parent of a young lad with C.P., I have worked with Bliss Symbols and know that these children can be communicated with and great things are happening in the education system with the Bliss Symbols. So why not teach them about God at Sunday School?"

The B.C.F. has informed all symbol families in the area of this service. Visitors to Toronto and those interested in initiating such a project in their home communities are urged to attend or write for information to Mr. Don Seaton, 1266 Oxford Avenue, Oakville, Ontario. L6H 1S7

Location: Grace Carman United Church, Toronto

Time: Sundays at 2:00 p.m.

Transportation: Buses for handicapped available from Toronto, Markham, Richmond Hill, Oakville

Staff: 150 Hustlers and their wives

Objective: To teach God's word through Bliss Symbols

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The next issue, Spring, will be published in May. Please submit articles, letters and comments by April 15, 1978. Symbol people are caring people, symbol people are sharing people - please share your thoughts and ideas with us.

Barbara Rush  
Editor

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#### BLISSYMBOLICS WITH CEREBRAL PALSID ADULT

By: Lynda Dunal  
Occupational Therapist  
Vancouver, B.C.

Blissymbolics has been in use at Pearson Hospital off and on over the past few years. In the spring of 1977 it was started up again. The following description is of one of the successess we had with an adult cerebral palsied woman.

Ann is a 40 year old woman with cerebral palsy. She has limited speech. Only a few words are intelligible by those working closely with her. She can say yes and no. Hands and arms are quite involved with chorieform movements but she is able to use her Right hand for some gross weaving.



Ann had no education and lived at home till her late teen years. She doesn't read or write. Since coming to Pearson Ann was started on a Blissymbolics project in 1974. This was not followed through and Ann did not pursue it.

In the spring of 1977 Blissymbolics was introduced again to Ann by the Occupational Therapist. She was taught two symbols at the beginning. These were made with  $1\frac{1}{2}$ " by  $1\frac{1}{2}$ " squares of coloured construction paper mounted on a heavy cardboard folder. Ann could point to these with one finger on her Right hand quite well. During the next several weeks Ann learned many more symbols. They were added one or two at a time. When she felt ready to learn more she could easily let the Occupational Therapist know.

During the summer, Ann started using another homemade Bliss board. The squares were 1" by 1". She had no problem indicating the symbols.

Several Occupational Therapy students worked with Ann over the summer with her Bliss symbols and one continues to come in at night once a week to help her learn different symbols.

This fall an official Bliss group has been set up. There are about eight adults officially in the group. Some of them are verbal but are interested in learning the symbols so they can communicate with the other Bliss users. Ann is in the group and now knows about 60 symbols. She still wants to learn at least two symbols a week and if there is time she does.

Since she has started using the Bliss, Ann's own speech has improved. She is attempting speech more often and her words seem clearer. She has developed much more confidence in her self and she is becoming more extravert in her behaviour. All these are quite positive improvements.

Blissymbolics is an integral part of the lives of some people at Pearson and the results have been quite promising. We hope to introduce Blissymbolics to the appropriate non-verbal people that we see coming here to Pearson.

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#### BLISSYMBOLICS AND BANFIELD

By: Mona Frederickson  
Vancouver, B.C.

An inservice program on Blissymbolics has been slowly unfolding for the past three months. Just short of 300 symbols, chosen on the basis of a basic symbol vocabulary as defined by the Blissymbolics Communication Foundation, were broken down in a developmental manner suitable for learning the components of a symbol compound.

Physical medicine aides participated in daily sessions on symbol instruction for approximately two weeks. A brief overview on types of language disorders encountered in the aphasic patient was also discussed.

Large displays 3' x 4' were placed on each floor and changed weekly. A written explanation accompanied the symbols shown, as well as an envelope to receive any questions or suggestions.



Symbols such as "toilet", "nurse", "activity aide", "therapist", "physical therapy room", were drawn on  $8\frac{1}{2}$  x 11 paper and placed in the appropriate areas, (ie. toilet symbol on toilet door).

A handout was drawn up and printed for distribution amongst the staff. The handouts followed the same 300 word sequence as the displays previously mentioned. I am now in the process of explaining how Blissymbolics is compatible with extended care. Eight handouts were left on each floor for the staff to study at their convenience. I will see the staff during their afternoon conference once a week, for about four weeks, to cover all rotations of evening and night as well as day personnel.

Handouts were also distributed to the cleaning, secretarial, pharmacy and dietary staff. I will be meeting with the dietary people again, to explain the mechanics and justifications for Bliss in Banfield.

A "reality orientation" board was designed in Bliss symbols and placed on each floor in a prominent area.

#### Directions of Bliss and Banfield

Although the inservice program was mainly designed to meet the needs of staff members, I always kept the displays and size of the symbols at a level that could be easily read by the visually handicapped person in a wheelchair. I feel it is necessary to allow the adult patient time to become familiar with the symbols and feel comfortable enough with them to accept symbols as an alternate form of communication.

One younger patient requested that he be allowed to learn the symbols and many suggestions have come from staff members, as to individuals that may profit from such a system. The support has been most encouraging.

Due to the age and medical condition of many of our patients, the idea of each patient having his own board of symbols never met with much success. The older people reject anything that signals them out as different, such as a symbol table attached to the wheelchair. Their motivation to adapt to carrying and using a less conspicuous folding board was low. However, in many cases, the ability to learn, at least, a small number of symbols is present.

We are therefore approaching the physical display and use of symbols differently from that which is common in the Ontario Hospital for Children.

A 3' x 2' bulletin board has been ordered for each floor. This board will be mounted on the front of the nursing station and will hold 36 6" x 4" symbol cards. The vocabulary to be chosen will be a joint staff effort, reflecting the needs of the patients on that particular floor. The bulletin board will facilitate the changing of symbols to meet changing needs.

Physical Medicine will assume the responsibility of introduction. That is, a patient that requires daily instruction to learn several or many symbols may be referred for communication classes. However, the assistance of every other staff member is greatly needed to reinforce the use of a symbol. A patient will only use the central board if he is encouraged to use it and meets with successful communication when he does use it. The nursing staff would also be a valuable aide in identification of patients and a useable vocabulary.



In the future, I envision (my visions come with the aide of nursing enthusiasm) a Bliss board at each end of the ward as well as at the nursing station and staff members with pocket flip cards they would have available at all time. A central display in the lobby and Physical Medicine would allow the use of symbols to travel with the patient throughout the hospital environment.

All of this does not eliminate the possibility of a patient having his own board of twenty-five, fifty, one hundred or two hundred symbols. With the opportunity to learn present at all times, the older extended care patient could make achievements far beyond my expectations.

Realistically though, I announce success if a patient who was never able to communicate any want or thought easily can now point to one symbol and realize he has re-entered the world of communication.

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#### BLISS SYMBOL PROGRAM - WOODLANDS

By: S. Bolding  
Woodlands, B.C.

The Bliss Symbol Program in Woodlands (New Westminster, B.C.) has been in operation for almost two years. There are nine residents in the program and ages range from twenty to fifty years. Most have very poor speech, or no speech at all, plus physical handicaps. Intelligence ranges from severe to borderline normal.

The symbols were introduced very slowly. We gave them symbols that we felt were important to them, and in the beginning it was based on a reward system for use. We did not feel that it was necessary for mentally retarded to understand the theory of symbol construction, as long as they could use the symbols to communicate. Five of the residents progressed very little in the past year. They have between twenty and sixty symbols on their boards and only by doing repetitious work will they learn to use more symbols. The other four residents are now using up to four hundred symbols on their boards. We did not try to introduce an understanding of the system at first, because they were only interested in communicating, not how the system worked.

As time went by the advanced group started to ask questions about the symbols. These four residents do now understand some of the theory behind the symbols, but still have a long way to go. In these two years we have had our share of successes and failures, but only by trying will we find out who could be a potential Bliss user. Since they can't tell us maybe we can show them.

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#### BLISSYMBOLS AND STROKE PATIENTS

By: Terry Ryan - Speech Therapist  
Victoria, B.C.

In association with Blissymbolic Programme workers, I have found Blissymbols useful in improving some dysphasic patients' organization and planning. Quite consistently a person will stop and review possible selections from Blissymbols and be confident he can make a correct response. This fulfills the two most



common aims of treatment of a dysphasic person: to experience success in communication and to increase organization and monitoring of responses. It seems that the organized structure of the symbol system is beneficial, especially to aphasic patients, in facilitating response and initiation of expression. One severely aphasic patient was able to initiate an idea spontaneously by writing symbols he had learned but were not on his board (he would not have been able to initiate the idea otherwise). The organized, visual system may also improve the receptive comprehension of a person who cannot consistently interpret verbal or written language symbols, but this remains to be investigated.

There have been several encouraging experiences of adult dysphasics using Blissymbols. Actual success, however, is indicated if a person utilizes the symbols to communicate. Probably the most important factor to consider is the person's reaction to the Blissymbols and his motivation to use them. A person who was once a healthy, normal adult will often want to maintain his image prior to his illness and may reject alternate means of communication. Group sessions can facilitate acceptance of the symbol system if the group members are carefully selected for compatibility. It is also essential to gain the support (by familiarizing with the symbols) of others in the environment and to consider the feasibility of symbol usage within individual living situations. (Instructional sessions are generally carried out in the housing setting). The person's health status and level of abilities are important considerations - as either may rule out further instruction.

I see introduction of Blissymbols to dysphasic adults as a double edged responsibility requiring an intuitive understanding of the pathology involved in dysphasia and familiarity and openness to the potential of Blissymbols. There is still much uncovered ground to cover in this area.

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### THREE YEARS ON

By: Jill Hammond  
England

Have you ever watched a little snowball roll down a hill and reach the bottom as a big boulder, having gathered momentum and mass en route? This is the situation of Blissymbolics in Britain three years after first introducing Blissymbols to children at Heathfield School, Fareham. Interest in Blissymbolics has escalated enormously.

In June 1974 I saw Bliss Symbols being used with four cerebral palsied teenagers in Vancouver, British Columbia. Knowing that I was returning to a school where there were non communicating children, I took the opportunity to visit the Ontario Crippled Children's Centre in Toronto before coming home.

Armed with only a 1973 O.C.C.C. Communication Team Report and the 100, 200 and 400 chart, I was given permission to work with two cerebral palsied children and soon I was finding it hard to keep up with them. At first we had daily sessions in my room, but gradually as they knew more symbols it became evident that as an occupational therapist I knew little about reading and writing skills, so Patricia Bailey, the class teacher, stepped in. Thus began a multi-disciplinary partnership which is so important in any symbol programme.



Soon parents and teachers began to notice differences in the symbol children. They were 'coming alive', taking an active part in class discussions, becoming interested in their environment and wanting to initiate conversations with anyone who was available. Since Heathfield is a new school integrating physically handicapped and ESN(M) children there was a constant stream of visitors. They often spent a considerable time with either Tricia or myself whilst we explained the system, and then the children themselves chatted - often about their families or their favourite television programme. Visitors usually wanted more information and details, and so we began the endless task of typing out stencils, duplicating and collating the sheets. Since neither of us are born secretaries this was a slow, laborious business! Little did we realize that it was just a foretaste of the huge amount of secretarial work which was to follow.

When I asked for a contact for Bliss in Britain, the only name the O.C.C.C. could give me was Nigel Ring, the Technical Director at Chailey Heritage, Sussex. He had seen the symbols being used during a previous visit to the centre in Toronto, and although a programme had been started at Chailey in May 1973 it had been discontinued six months later. However, his interest in Blissymbolics and their application still remained.

It was exciting to establish contact with someone else who knew about symbols, and through Nigel we contacted Alison MacDonald who was a speech therapist in Edinburgh. She was using symbols with a few children and was having similar exciting results. It was certainly good to find someone who was actually using the system, and we did not feel that we were pioneering alone anymore. Both of us found the Canadian Newsletter an excellent resource book, and we began to exchange ideas.

In April 1975, Roger Jefcoate came to school to assess a child for a typewriter, and he happened to notice an electronic communicator which the Royal Navy had made to display Bliss symbols. He was fascinated by the potential of this logical symbol system for many of the severely handicapped non-communicating people he visits, and he invited us to lecture at this forthcoming course on Educational Technology for Handicapped Children at Castle Priory.

We were very dubious about sharing from our limited experience because we did not want it to appear that we were just jumping on the next 'bandwagon' that had come along. However, having watched children being 'unlocked' and starting to express their own thoughts and ideas we were convinced that we were sitting on a goldmine. Our fears were unfounded, and we received a very warm reception, especially as we were an education/medical team working together.

A course participant from I.L.E.A. asked us if we would share some of our experiences with her colleagues, so we agreed to go up to London on a Saturday afternoon. Thinking that there would be about 25 people you can imagine our surprise when there were over a hundred! It was becoming evident that interest in Charles Bliss's work and the results of the O.C.C.C. Communication Team were spreading. To date (January 1976) there were only four centres using symbols, but it was clear that some national co-ordination and further in-depth training was needed.

A meeting was called in February to try and identify interest areas and future aims. There appeared to be two alternatives - either someone from Britain could go to Toronto to receive training in Blissymbolics, or better still, a couple from the Canadian team could be invited to lecture in Britain. However, that would cost money.....and we did not have any!



Following that meeting it was decided to organize a Summer School in Blissymbolics and we were very fortunate to have generous grants from Action Research for the Crippled Child, The Brighton and Hove Youth Charitable Trust, Possum Research Foundation and the Spastics Society. This enabled staff from the Blissymbolics Communication Foundation to visit Britain, and forty participants attended the First United Kingdom Summer School at Bishop Otter College, Chichester in July 1976.

Five intensive days of lectures by Shirley McNaughton and Barbara Kates, and follow up work with worksheets in small discussion groups, gave participants a good opportunity to see the tremendous scope of the Bliss Symbol System. Each person returned to their setting keen to explore the possibilities of using symbols with children and adults representing a wide range of handicaps.

During the following months Heathfield School was used as the co-ordinating centre for Bliss Symbols, and we began to get a large pile of mail each day which was answered by burning the midnight oil. The Interim Steering Committee, formed after Summer School, worked towards establishing a Resource Centre in Britain, with a sub-licence from the Blissymbolics Communication Foundation in Toronto. On April 1, 1977 we received a two year research grant for £20,000 from Action Research for the Crippled Child, and on Jubilee Day 1977, Nigel Ring signed the sub-licence in Toronto and the Blissymbolics Communication Resource Centre (UK) became the first Resource Centre outside North America.

These past three years have been extremely busy but very rewarding, and we certainly never thought that from our small beginnings would come the British Resource Centre. This is the direct result of co-operation and help from many people, and we should like to thank everyone who has been involved in any way. We look forward to working with you during the coming months, and realising that Bliss symbols in Britain have grown and expanded so much in the last three years, we join with you in eagerly waiting to see where Blissymbolics will be three years on.....

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#### THE CHANCE OF A LIFETIME - CHURCHILL FELLOWSHIP 1977

By: Jill Hammond  
England

'The chance of a lifetime' was the slogan across the leaflet advertising the Winston Churchill Travelling Fellowships for 1977. As the interest in Bliss Symbols had snowballed since I first introduced the system to Heathfield School, Fareham, in October 1974, the possibility of exploring Blissymbolics in depth appealed to me and I applied for a Fellowship. My chances appeared minimal as there were 2884 applicants for 87 fellowships and 836 people in my section alone. I took the 100, 200, and 400 charts to my interview and the panel were fascinated by the potential of the system: so much so that they awarded me one of the nine fellowships in my category. Now the work really began.

Suddenly I was booked on a flight leaving on April 18th. Panic struck as not only did I have my fellowship to plan, but arrangements to make at school for my three months absence. For some months I had been corresponding with Shirley McNaughton outlining my plans, but doing this from the other side of the ocean was hard - our letters invariably crossed in mid Atlantic!



Arriving in Toronto I felt a real thrill to be back in Canada, as when I left in September 1974 I certainly did not think that I would be returning so soon, let alone having all expenses paid. I naively thought that my Churchill Fellowship would enable me to visit friends and travel across North America 'taking in' a few symbol centres en route. However, I soon discovered that the BCF were adopting an international flavour for a few weeks as instructors from Sweden, Australia, Britain and Regina were assembling for in-service training which would require much time and energy.

I enjoyed the challenge of Workshop Presenter Training and found the Advanced Workshop an excellent place to meet instructors and plan visits to their centres. Even though I had travelled across Canada by Greyhound on a previous occasion, I was still very unrealistic in planning my itinerary for seven weeks of living from a suitcase whilst visiting programmes. Many hours and phone calls later I had a skeleton plan, which in retrospect was rather heavy, but extremely useful in achieving my fellowship aims.

Since none of the British programmes have reached an advanced stage, it was very valuable to be able to observe well established on-going programmes. In Britain most work has been done with physically handicapped children, so visits to mentally retarded institutions, observing work with deaf and autistic symbol users, and discussing problems with adult aphasics were all opportunities to gain further insights into other areas of application.

My eyes were opened to the vast spectrum of alternative means of communication as I was fortunate enough to attend the Technical Workshop on non-vocal communication aids organized by the National Research Council. The age of the computer and micro-processor has certainly heralded a new era for the handicapped. However, simple aids still have their place and the whole scope of eye scanning techniques has given me many different areas to explore. I was able to take over 700 slides relating to communication, and these have already been invaluable whilst lecturing. There were so many good ideas which, although I had been running a programme for two years, had never occurred to me. At all the centres I visited instructors and symbol users were very patient in letting me arrange equipment and answering my barrage of questions.

One of the most valuable parts of my Churchill Fellowship was the more informal moments in Canadian and American homes. I am sure that there are few Churchill Fellows who have experienced such kindness and lavish hospitality. Now people are no longer just names on a piece of paper, but faces and personalities, which only serves to reinforce the fact that throughout my travels I got the feeling that we belong to a very special 'family'. Someone said that there is something great about symbol people - all barriers are broken down immediately, and I found this to be true.

All too soon it was time to say final good-byes and head for home. Having visited 34 centres, attended 5 conferences and workshops and seen some panoramic views from the aeroplane whilst travelling, returning to school for the last three weeks of term seemed quite an anticlimax! Helping children with basic activities of daily living soon brought me down to earth....but I hope that something of the vision and possibilities for the expansion of Blissymbolics in Britain will remain. May I take this opportunity to thank everyone who helped to make my trip so worthwhile.

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BLISS AND READING

By: Helen Marshall  
Vancouver, B.C.

Before most children learn to truly read, they have usually developed a "sight" vocabulary through repetition. They have first heard and then said their own name countless times before they understand the graphic configuration as a symbol for themselves. In order to allow the child who is non-speaking to progress through this step in initial reading, that is, sight vocabulary - the beginning association of the graphic configuration with the real object, a substitute for the spoken word is needed. The child needs the opportunity to use words over and over in many ways just as the speaking child does.

Picture boards are one obvious solution. However many non-speaking children are vastly more capable of using language in more ways than a picture board can accommodate.

Spelling, either with a typewriter keyboard or the alphabet, is another option. Spelling is a skill not usually developed to any great degree in the non-handicapped child before eight and nine years old so it is not a practical solution to language development and expression in the young handicapped child. Because the slower child may need to see a word fifty to a hundred times before he will remember it and then have to learn the mechanics of pointing to the alphabet so that his "listener" can understand, the spelling process can become very tedious, confusing and frustrating. When the problems of poor motor control compound learning difficulties, spelling as a means of acquiring beginning reading skills falls short as an alternative program.

The following important points of the Blissymbolics system could be considered in relation to Bliss as an adjunctive to a reading program.

1. It builds a sight vocabulary - child goes over same words and symbols many times as he gives messages and news important to him.
  2. It expands language concepts and semantics - multiple words for same meaning e.g. house, home; syntax - easier to understand tense with symbols as opposed to many word form changes e.g. go - gone, went.
  3. It innovates expressive language - child is actually able to ask questions and answer questions and initiate activity.
  4. It is well structured - logical sense and construction with only a few symbols for slower child; allows complex language for more able child.
  5. It motivates - it's fun! it's humorous (symbol for toilet chair over water - short, snappy and sharp!)
    - it's pictorial - in many instances looks like what it is (Chair) making it easier to associate with meaning.
    - it's rewarding - word under symbol encourages attention and understanding from "listener."
    - it's challenging - stimulating to thinking and inventiveness with language for both student and teacher (combining symbols for particular meaning in special circumstances e.g. circus, hot dog)
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BLISS SYMBOLS AND READING

By: J.C. MacDougall, Ph.D.  
Montreal

The question whether physically handicapped children who use Bliss Symbols as a method of communication can learn to read is of fundamental importance to the development of appropriate educational programming for "Bliss Children".

One of the main difficulties that has to be confronted in trying to answer this question is that so very little is known about perceptual and cognitive functioning in children with Cerebral Palsy, and, even less is known about these processes in children who are unable to speak because of the brain damage associated with Cerebral Palsy. It seems clear however that most children who use the Bliss System do have serious perceptual difficulties in both the visual and the auditory systems. While these children can make the perceptual discriminations which allow them to use the pictographic symbols, most of the children cannot, without considerable training, read words and sentences. Some facts are known about the development of the reading process in normal children. Reading only occurs in development after the child has attained considerable competence in both speaking and in understanding spoken language. While the reading process itself depends on the development of visual perceptual skills which allow for letter and word recognition, the process of translating from the visual to the auditory modality (sounding out words) introduces a significant auditory component to the development of the reading process. In the phonetic method children are required to associate phonemes with letters and combinations of letters which are presented visually and this is then mapped on the existing auditory language system which is reasonably highly developed in normal children, at 6 years of age. Children who cannot speak are not able to follow this process in their reading development. They do not appear to be able to look at a letter or phoneme and translate this into the auditory system through either overt or covert vocalization. Any association between the visual stimulus and the sound associated with it would have to be direct and not mediated by the motor system. Presumably the Bliss child does have an auditory language system which develops as a result of hearing other people speak, but this is not reinforced by self produced speech production. Therefore apart from any visual perceptual problems a Bliss child may have, he (she) would not appear to have the capability of learning to read by the phonetic system as we know it. All of this suggests that alternative approaches to the development of the reading process must be explored, and it is important to attempt to explore a system of reading which would allow some part of the active motor system to translate visual images to the auditory system.

One line of research which has a bearing on these issues involves the study of visual processing in a particular kind of short-term memory paradigm. A number of studies (Conrad 1960, 1964) have shown that normally subjects use auditory coding or processing in a visual memory situation. The advantage of this for memory lies in the special qualities of temporal sequencing, rhythm and chunking that are associated with auditory processing as compared to visual processing, which is essentially spatial. If this is an important aspect of the reading process then the inability to do this on the part of the "Bliss Children" could be a fundamental problem. It is of interest in this connection to compare the situation as it exists in deaf children. Deaf children also have problems reading and part of the problem appears to stem from the fact that while the deaf children have the vocal mechanisms for translating from the visual to the auditory system, they are seriously impaired in the auditory system. So, in the case of the "Bliss Children" the mechanisms for translating from one system to the other,



are lacking, and, in the case of deaf children, the mechanisms exist but the auditory system itself is deficient.

### Research Program

(1) Visual Perception - it is of fundamental importance to determine the visual perceptual capacities of the children who use Bliss Symbols as a method of communication. A number of simple experiments seem appropriate.

(a) Ability to recognize letters of the alphabet. This could be done by presenting individual letters and having children match them with identical letters. Also a paired comparison technique could be utilized in which children are asked to judge whether the letters of a pair are the same or different. This could be particularly useful in determining whether children are experiencing difficulties with reversals.

(b) Memory Span - Single digit span and letter span techniques could be used to measure memory span. Children are presented with a series of stimulus items and asked to recall or recognize the letters or digits presented. The recall paradigm would of course be difficult due to the extreme physical disability of the children. The presentation could be in both the visual and auditory modalities.

(c) Short-term Memory Paradigm - This would involve the presentation of a series of letters for memorization and the error pattern would be analyzed according to the Conrad paradigm in order to establish the modality of processing that is taking place during memorization.

(d) Methods of translating from the visual to the auditory modality. Experimentation here could be with the vocorder which is a device that is capable of synthesizing speech sounds. One approach might be to have the child look at a simple word then press the appropriate keys which would produce the speech sounds associated with the word. This might be an adequate substitute for internal speech as a way of translating visual symbols into the auditory system.

(e) Once information is available concerning the perceptual and cognitive processes underlying reading, then various educational approaches to the development of reading in the Bliss children could be undertaken.

It is entirely possible that we may find that the basic processes involved in reading are impaired to such an extent that adequate reading skills for a phonetically based language such as English will be virtually impossible for many Bliss children. If this is the case then serious consideration will have to be given to further development and extension of the symbol system so that a wider range of vocabulary is available and other systems of acquiring information will have to be explored for these children. A further important area to be studied involves the transition from an essentially ideographic communication system (Bliss) which has its own peculiar logic and syntax to English structure and syntax. Appropriate strategies for transition from a symbol based language to phonetic language will need to be explored. There is some relevant information available on this topic from the Rebus approach to reading which involves the use of pictures as a way of developing language deficient children.

If anyone is currently working on any of these problems or if there is an interest in pursuing this line of research please contact Dr. J. MacDougall, c/o B.C.F. Toronto.



A SECOND LANGUAGE

By: Shirley McNaughton  
B.C.F. Toronto

I thought the Newsletter readers would enjoy seeing the next stage of Blissymbol communication - taking our youngsters to a second language. I received "Letter One" from Kari Harrington after giving her a mini-French Symbol Board to try out. I had loaned the board to her with instructions that she could keep it if she wished to do so. "Letter Two!" came in response to my request to send the first letter to the Newsletter. I hope the readers are impressed with her speedy progress in verb forms. I was delighted to receive the letters!

Letter One (Typed by Kari)

Bonjour la  
Je aimer le neuf symbole table.  
Je aimer le idee.  
Je vouloir one.

Aimer, Kari

Hello there  
I like the new symbol table.  
I like the idea.  
I want one.

Love, Kari

Letter Two (Handwritten by Kari)

Bonjour femme McN.  
Merci pour toi lettre. Oui, tu peux!

Merci, aimer, Kari

P.S. Je allerai à moi Noël parti sur Decembre 16 (peut-être).

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OPTICAL POINTER - UPDATE

By: Ron Levy, Ph.D.  
Keila Waksvik, B.O.T.  
Montreal

1. General:

The optical pointer is a device which has been designed for the severely disabled non-verbal individual who lacks functional use of the upper limbs. The head-mounted device allows head movement to control the direction of a light beam, permitting direct selection of characters on a communication board. The light or optical pointer can be detached from the headgear and replaced by a rod which will allow typing on an electric typewriter. A felt pen, paintbrush etc. can also be attached to the rod to allow participation in graphic activities.

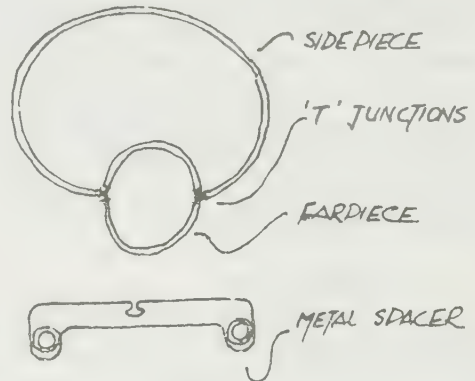


The headgear which forms the anchorage for the different accessories has been designed to achieve maximum comfort and stability with a minimum of pressure. The tubular material used for the headgear allows for easy custom fitting of any individual. The accessories are attached to the headset in a simple manner and can be fitted and adjusted easily and quickly.

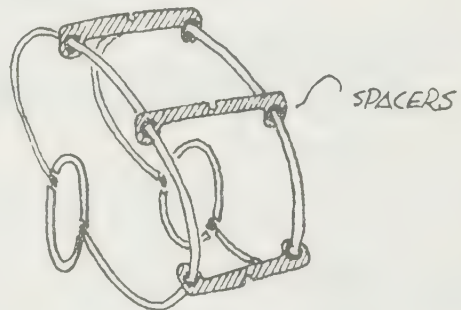
## 2. The component parts:

### (a) Headgear

The headgear consists of low density polyethylene tubing made up in two parts, or sidepieces. Each sidepiece is in the form of a large circle containing within it a smaller circle designed to go around the ears. The two circles are connected via metal 'T' junctions.

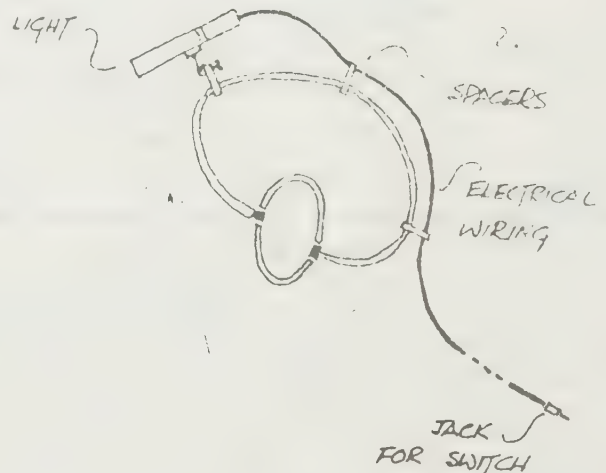


Each sidepiece is fitted to the head and held together by three metal spacers. By sliding these spacers along the plastic tube sidepieces, more or less pressure is applied to the head until optimum fit and comfort is obtained.



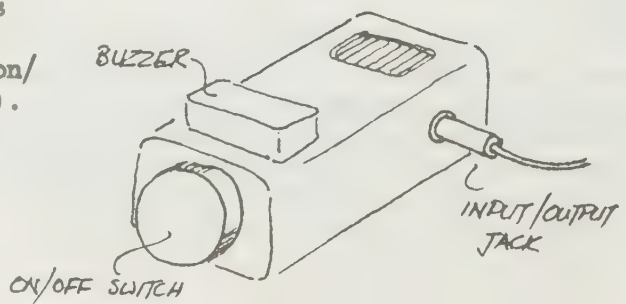
### (b) Light

The optical pointer is attached to the front spacer. The angle of the beam is easily adjusted by means of a ball-joint mechanism. The electrical wiring leading to the power source and the on/off switch is held in place by the other two spacers, as shown.



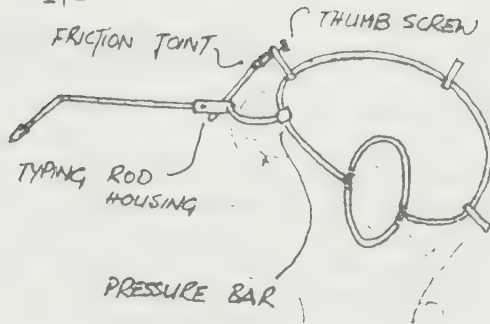
### (c) Switch

The switch box contains the power source (6v) and two controls. Both controls have been designed to be operated by the disabled user and consist of an on/off button and a call button (buzzer). The batteries may be recharged using standard recharging equipment.



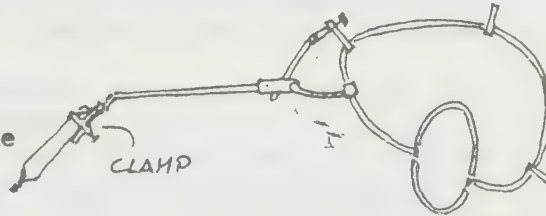
(d) Typing Rod

The typing rod is also attached to the front spacer. The pressure bar, which can be adjusted in height and angle, is attached to each sidepiece, to add to the stability of the device.



(e) Drawing accessory

A clamping device may be fitted to the end of the typing rod to allow pens, markers or brushes to be attached.



INTENDED USER POPULATION

The optical pointer has been designed for the severely disabled non-verbal individual who lacks functional use of the upper limbs. Disability groups which could benefit from this device include:

- Cerebral Palsy
- Brain Injury
- Traumatic Quadriplegia (Typing Rod Accessory)

Previous clinical experience with the optical pointer:

Originally developed for a young girl of 14 suffering from severe spastic quadriplegia, the first prototype of the optical pointer proved successful in providing independent access to a communication board. Both on/off switch and call buzzer were controlled unassisted. The headgear proved to be very stable despite poor grading of head movements.

The first prototype was also assessed with several severe athetoid quadriplegics with associated spasticity. A very cursory trial period indicated relevance with this cerebral palsy group, although independent use in the wheelchair was not possible. Students were positioned astride bolsters, and pathological movement patterns controlled by a therapist during communication with the pointer. Unless positioned in this way, poor head control would cause the headgear to come into contact with some part of the wheelchair, and it would not retain an optimal position on the head. This brief assessment period did not allow us to determine whether students would ultimately achieve independent use of the device.

The first prototype did not include a typing rod.

The optical pointer with accessories is presently undergoing field testing in a limited number of clinical settings. Results should be available in the fall of 1978.



## DESCRIPTION DU POINTEUR OPTIQUE

### 1. Généralités:

Le pointeur optique est un appareil qui a été conçu en fonction des individus sévèrement handicapés et privés de la parole qui n'ont pas l'usage de leurs membres supérieurs. Le casque permet, par les mouvements de la tête, de contrôler la direction d'un rayon lumineux afin de sélectionner des caractères sur un tableau de communication. Le pointeur optique se détache du casque et se remplace par une "licorne" (tige métallique à pointe sèche) qui permet d'écrire sur une machine à écrire électrique. A la licorne, on peut fixer un crayon feutre, un pinceau etc., et ainsi la personne peut participer aux activités graphiques.

Le casque qui sert de point d'ancrage aux différents accessoires a été conçu pour assurer un confort et une stabilité maximum en supposant un minimum de pression. Le matériau tubulaire utilisé dans la fabrication du casque facilite l'ajustement sur mesure pour n'importe quel individu. Les accessoires se fixent au casque d'une manière simple et peuvent être ajustés aisément et rapidement.

### 2. Les composantes:

#### (a) Le casque

Le casque se compose de deux pièces latérales fabriquées en tube de polypropylène à basse densité. Chacune de ces pièces a la forme d'un grand cercle contenant un plus petit cercle qui contourne les oreilles. Les deux cercles sont reliés par des petits joints de métal en forme de "T".

Chaque pièce latérale est ajustée à la forme de la tête et reliée à l'autre par trois entretoises de métal. On obtient un ajustement optimum et un bon confort en faisant glisser les entretoises sur les tubes des pièces latérales afin d'obtenir plus ou moins de pression.

#### (b) La lampe

Le pointeur optique est fixé au casque sur l'entretoise du devant. L'angle du faisceau est réglable grâce à un joint sphérique. Le fil électrique reliant le pointeur à la source d'énergie est retenu en place par les deux autres entretoises, tel qu'indiqué sur le dessin.

#### (c) L'interrupteur

La boîte de l'interrupteur comprend une source électrique (6v) et deux contrôles. Chacun de ces contrôles ont été conçus en fonction de l'utilisateur handicapé. Le premier bouton allume et éteint la lumière (on/off) et le deuxième est une sonnerie d'appel. Les piles peuvent être rechargées en utilisant n'importe quel équipement de recharge standard.

#### (d) Licorne (bâton à pointe sèche)

La licorne est un long bâton à pointe sèche qui sert à opérer une machine à écrire. Elle est attachée à l'entretoise du devant. Plusieurs ajustements peuvent être faits en fonction des caractéristiques de chaque individu. La barre de pression, qui peut être ajustée en hauteur et en angle, est attachée à chaque pièce latérale et ajoute ainsi à la stabilité de l'appareil.

(e) Accessoire pour le dessin

Un système d'attache s'ajoute à l'extrémité de la licorne et permet ainsi l'usage de crayon, de crayon feutre ou de pinceaux.

LE SECTEUR D'USAGER

Le pointeur optique a été conçu en fonction des individus non-verbaux atteints d'un handicap physique sévère, n'ayant pas l'usage de leurs membres supérieurs pour designer des caractères sur un tableau de communication. Les groupes d'handicapés qui bénéficieraient d'un tel appareil comprennent ceux atteints de:

- Paralyse cérébrale
- Traumatisme crânien
- Quadriplegie traumatique (accessoire: licorne)

Expérience préalable de la clinique avec le pointeur optique:

Au départ, le premier prototype du pointeur optique a été développé pour une jeune fille de 14 ans souffrant de quadriplegie spastique sévère. Il s'est montré efficace en lui permettant l'indépendance dans l'usage de son tableau de communication. Les interrupteurs actionnant la lampe ainsi que la sonnerie d'appel étaient contrôlés sans aide extérieur. Le casque s'est avéré très stable malgré un assez pauvre contrôle des mouvements de la tête.

Ce premier prototype a aussi été évalué avec des cas sévères de quadriplegie athétosique avec spasticité. Une période d'essai très courte a indiqué sa pertinence avec ce groupe de paralytiques cérébraux, cependant un usage indépendant dans la chaise roulante n'était pas possible. Les étudiants étaient assis à califourchon sur un siège traversin, et les mouvements pathologiques étaient contrôlés par la thérapeute au cours de l'exercice de communication avec pointeur optique. Si l'enfant n'était pas dans cette position, à cause du peu de contrôle des mouvements de la tête, il se frappait sur une partie de la chaise roulante, et le casque perdait sa position optimum. Cette courte période d'évaluation ne nous a pas permis de vérifier si les étudiants arriveraient finalement à utiliser l'appareil de manière autonome.

Le premier prototype ne comprenait pas de licorne.

Le pointeur optique est présentement en évaluation clinique dans plusieurs centres. Les résultats de cette évaluation seront communiqués à l'automne 1978.

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WHAT YOU ALWAYS WANTED TO KNOW ABOUT A RESOURCE CENTRE BUT  
WERE AFRAID TO ASK !

By: Margaret McCuaig  
Vancouver, B.C.

Several people have written to ask me exactly what is involved in becoming a Resource Centre. This is the first time I have had time to put it all down on paper and I am curious myself to see what comes out!



Blissymbolics got its start here in the West a number of years ago largely through the efforts of Sandy Wrightman. She has been responsible for much of the pioneering and groundwork accomplished in British Columbia. In January 1977, a group of us met to see if we could somehow co-ordinate what was happening here and establish some means of communication between Toronto and ourselves, as well as between therapists using the symbols. I would like to mention Carol (Ashford) Barchard who was a tremendous help in getting things moving. We were sorry to lose her to Edmonton. We sent out a questionnaire to many therapists and hospitals requesting information on their symbol programmes. The response was encouraging and we felt we had sufficient support to form a co-ordinating committee. Then, in February, Shirley McNaughton and Marjorie Buchanan visited us and put forward the idea of a Resource Centre. So, in true Peter Principle fashion, we decided to try our hands at becoming a Resource Centre! Response to our questionnaire revealed that our most evident need was for further education. We approached the B.C.F. about holding a workshop in Vancouver and Penny Parnes and Shirley McNaughton agreed to do so.

The preparation for our first workshop was a major undertaking. I read with interest Jane Green's account of the Newfoundland workshop as we experienced many similar happenings. An incredible amount of volunteer time went into the workshop preparation. Sunny Hill Hospital staff were also very encouraging and supportive and we could not have succeeded without their help, particularly with typing and other secretarial assistance. The course proceeded smoothly and proved to be well worth the time and effort put into it. One thing we did do, being concerned with the cost of the workshop for out-of-towners, was to set up places for billeting. This worked out very well and was enjoyed by both visitors and hosts. It was a great way to get to know others involved in symbol programmes throughout the province.

After the workshop, things quietened down a little. However, we continued to receive many enquiries from people wishing general information and requests to tour established symbol programmes. Although Sunny Hill Hospital is not the Resource Centre, it has been beneficial to be located here as this setting provides a number of symbol users willing to accept visitors.

One of the highlights for me personally over the past year, was the opportunity to attend the Advisory Council meetings in July. I found these sessions a tremendous boost and it was very encouraging as well as informative to meet with others involved in or contemplating Resource Centres.

The Executive of our Resource Centre has decided that we should become a non-profit society and request funding by means of private donations. Many factors caused this decision. We felt that due to the variety of applications of Blissymbols and the large number of institutions and organizations involved in symbol instruction, it would be wise to have a "neutral" Resource Centre. We are, however, physically located at Sunny Hill Hospital and this has been invaluable in establishing our Centre. Administration and staff have been supportive with both verbal encouragement and practical help. Thus we have excellent secretarial help as well as a mailing address and office space.

We have found that we must allocate a great deal of time to handling correspondence with the B.C.F. in Toronto and symbol instructors throughout the province. There is a fair amount of time requested for public speaking and professional presentations. Last year we spent much time on inservice programmes. Putting on a workshop is an exhausting task, although the planning for our second seems much easier than the first! Two people from our Resource Centre put on an inservice programme in the Okanagan and felt this was a valuable function for the Resource Centre.

It is our hope that we will become more involved with organizing practical work sessions, particularly following a workshop. Another of our involvements is with the Kinsmen Rehabilitation Foundation in terms of their Technical Aids programme. They, too, have been most supportive of our work.

Every Resource Centre will of necessity be different, depending upon their location and type of institution or setting. It is a new and exciting area in which to become involved, and I personally have been very encouraged by the support given by so many people.

In closing I would like to recommend to the B.C.F. to continue holding meetings of Resource Centre personnel. The exchange of ideas and general "mutual encouragement" is so necessary for the successful continuation of a Resource Centre.

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MR. BLISS IN VANCOUVER

By: Margaret McCuaig  
Vancouver, B.C.

On Tuesday, December 6th at noon, we had a phone call saying that Charles Bliss would be arriving Wednesday in Vancouver, and would be leaving again on Sunday. The word spread quickly and in spite of threatening snow storms (which throws Vancouverites into a panic), about 150 people turned out to G.F. Strong on Thursday evening to hear Charles Bliss. It was a unique opportunity for those of us there, to meet the man who has created this incredible system we now know as Blissymbolics. Charles spoke for the first part of the evening, on his life and experiences, which led to his creating the symbols. He emphasized that it was out of hard times, out of struggles and adversity that this system was born. He then explained a few of his symbols, pointing out some of the discrepancies which have appeared in regards to certain symbols. He gave us a very clear picture and an appreciation of the difficulties in working with such a new and alive system.

After a brief coffee break, Charles answered questions from the audience, on his symbol system. One of the most interesting questions was asked by a woman from Pearson, who is just beginning to look at Bliss symbols as a possible way of communication. This is a woman whose native tongue is Chinese, her second is English, and now she is contemplating the use of symbols as a means of communication. Her question dealt with the fact that using the symbols requires a different way of thinking. She felt that she would have to change her pattern of thinking and her way of expressing her ideas, were she to use the symbols for communication. This is a very thought-provoking question for us all.

Helen Marshall, in thanking Charles for speaking, summed it up by saying how grateful she was to Charles Bliss for giving her a tool that she could use in teaching and reaching her students, a tool that has opened up communication for the non-verbal person.

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KINSMEN REHABILITATION FOUNDATION OF B.C.

TECHNICAL AIDS PROGRAM

By: Margaret Perry  
Vancouver, B.C.

The Kinsmen Rehabilitation Foundation of B.C. provides a variety of services for the physically handicapped which are not fundable via any other source.

Background

The origins of the Foundation are to be found in the time of the Polio epidemic of the 1950's, during which funds were urgently sought to provide life support equipment such as Tank Respirators. Thus began, for this particular voluntary agency an identification with the more severely physically handicapped which has continued to the present time. A close association has been maintained with those who survived the epidemic and are presently in extended care and who are in most cases reliant on some form of respiratory assistance. It was largely the awareness of the limitations in life style imposed upon these individuals by the severity of their disability, which motivated the Foundation to seek ways in which their lives could be more self-determined. One result of this search was The Technical Aids Program.

The aim of this program, in the broadest terms, is the application of contemporary technology to maximize individual potential in pursuit of personal goals.

For anyone, eligible by degree of disability and motivated to improve their level of personal independence an assessment may be requested to ascertain whether the Technical Aids Program is the appropriate source of assistance, and if so, how it may be most effective, or if not, what alternatives are available.

The Service Delivery aspect of the Kinsmen Rehabilitation Foundation Technical Aids Program commenced in September 1973. The emphasis was placed on education and information of occupational therapists and other concerned rehabilitation personnel. The major objectives being:

- 1) to channel appropriate referrals to the program,
- 2) to standardize initial assessment procedures,
- 3) to familiarize occupational therapists with the scope of the program and their role in assessment and follow-up

77 installations have been made to date; including 15 for the severely verbally impaired or non-verbal. Cerebral palsy, Brain Stem Lesions, Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis are the major diagnostic categories within this communicatively impaired group.

By facilitating control of the immediate environment for a severely immobilized individual and maximizing communication for the purposes of any desired assistance socialization and other personal business can increase independence to a point where some options may be possible with regard to the accommodation and life style of that individual. Educational, recreational and vocational potential may be equally facilitated.

In the area of communication for the non-verbal, the Technical Aids Program of the Kinsmen Rehabilitation Foundation should be regarded as a resource in cases where the physical disability is of a degree which renders the standard and mechanical

substitute processes such as finger pointing, ineffective. In such cases, the application of electronic systems and custom-made or modified devices may facilitate communication. It must be stressed however, that, such applications only provide the hardware aspect and the actual mode of communication, whether it be Blissymbolics, the alphabet or any other system is of paramount importance. For this reason it is only effective for the Technical Aids Program to become involved with the non-verbal when an appropriately qualified agent is responsible for the communication mode. Only under such conditions can an effective communication system result from the efficient combination of the mode and the means.

When considering hardware the following requires consideration:  
Any communication aid should be able to facilitate

- 1) one-to-one conversation
- 2) group and/or classroom conversation

Quickly correctable soft-copy such as in writing on a T.V. screen, or small viewer may be of greatest use for inter-personal conversation and responding to classroom questions. However hard-copy such as the typewritten page for letters, personal or business or educational assignments may be equally important. Ideally, any electronic communication aid should be able to supply both, but this can be difficult to obtain and prohibitively expensive at the moment.

The mobility of any communication aid must also be considered for the most versatility.

A selection of the hardware used by the K.R.F. Technical Aids Program, to date have included the following in either a standard or modified version.

Expanded Keyboards. This is possibly the simplest and most useful application of the typewriter whenever co-ordination is a problem. Different makes of Expanded Keyboards range approximately from double the size of a standard electric typewriter keyboard to four times its size. The actual key size also varies from finger, to fist, to foot size. Obviously therefore, the selection of the appropriate expanded keyboard will be determined by how the individual will most consistently and efficiently be able to control the span of the keyboard with minimal fatigue and maximum efficiency.

8-input Typewriter. If an individual can manage a joy-stick control on a wheelchair, it is possible that they can point or manage a standard typewriter keyboard. However, different configurations of 8 switches such as a skate type foot switch can, via a code produce 45 w.p.m. which is a commercially acceptable output speed. This comprehensive typewriter control can be added to a word storage device which would then access the operator to commonly used words and phrases and double the output speed.

Single or Double Input Typewriter. This is applied in situations where only a single or at most 2 switches can be consistently controlled. The speed potential is approximately 10 w.p.m. It is necessary that the operator can see and respond to a visual indicator board which informs the operator where the selector mechanism is and the operator must be able to respond when the selector reaches the desired position.

Versacom. This system can put the written language on a T.V. screen, or a small viewer, and also print out via a strip printer. It is designed to fit on the arms of a wheelchair, the method of operation very similar to that of a single/double input typewriter.



Phapco. This is a standard size typewriter keyboard which writes on a T.V. screen.

100-Level Bliss Communicator. With the approval of the B.C.F. Prentke Romich are producing a system with several selection method options built in and the option of a memory function.

512 Bliss Communicator. This board was designed by the Ontario Crippled Children's Centre for those who are advanced in their utilization of Blissymbolics but unable to access their numbers or symbols because of the degree of their physical disability.

Yes/No Communicator. In cases where physical and speech impairment is extremely severe, a custom made switch may facilitate the operation of a visual and/or auditory yes/no response prior to more comprehensive communication.

Synthetic Speech, is available either in a totally comprehensive form via a computer or on a limited and specially programmed basis via a device similar to a small hand-held calculator. It will undoubtedly be some time before synthetic speech is affordable and acceptable.

Essentially the Technical Aids Program, whether concerned with environmental control or communication for the non-verbal, is only part of the total service package required, and only when the other component parts are available can it be an asset to the individual. Steve Egerton, the supervising engineer or myself would be happy to provide any further information or respond to enquiries concerning potential or specific referrals and assessments. The proliferation of expertise in Blissymbolics within the province of B.C. and across Canada is viewed by the Foundation as a considerable advancement in services for the communicatively impaired, and to this end the Foundation assisted with the costs of a Blissymbolics Workshop in Vancouver. The Technical Aids Program, though limited in its financial and personnel resources welcomes any opportunity to cooperate with those working in the area of communication.

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Postscript to above article from Margaret McCuaig, Vancouver Resource Centre. .

I would like to add to Margaret Perry's article in order to say a few things about the Kinsmen Foundation.

When the Vancouver Resource Centre announced its first workshop last April, we found that a number of people could not attend for financial reasons. We approached the Kinsmen Rehabilitation Foundation and they very generously donated a large sum of money to help therapists and teachers throughout the province attend the workshop. Margaret Perry, the Foundation's Director of Program Services, spoke at the workshop on the Technical Aids Program. She will also be presenting at our next workshop in January, 1978.

Steve Egerton, Supervisor of the Technical Aids Program, brings a wealth of experience and expertise to his work. At Sunny Hill we are working on technical aids for two children. Steve has been a tremendous help in providing ideas and producing interfaces for both children. One seven-year old girl, Lucy, is using a 400 symbol board and is now moving into a reading and spelling board. She was unable to use a regular typewriter with finger and guard. The Kinsmen Foundation has provided Lucy with an expanded key board which is on loan for the entire school year. This piece of equipment enables Lucy to do regular school work independently and efficiently.

Another child, Ricky, is unable to move his chair. With Steve's help we are attempting to design an interface that will allow Ricky to drive his chair. At the moment we are working on a mock-up piece of equipment which involves four switches attached to lights. These are spaced in an arc under plexiglass. To operate the switches, Ricky passes his hand (with magnet attached) over the switches and activates the lights. If he can do this successfully, he should be able to operate a chair. This will take much time and practice, but it is a start.

I would like to encourage any therapists working in B.C., to contact either Margaret Perry or Steve Egerton, if they have a child who could benefit from the Technical Aids Program. The Foundation has a wealth of information and equipment at their disposal.

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#### NEWS FROM SEATTLE

By: Sandra Gorohoff  
Seattle, Washington

On December 3, 1977, an organizational meeting of the Pacific Northwest Non-Vocal Communication Group was held at Children's Orthopedic Hospital, in Seattle, Washington. Approximately seventy-five people were present for the initial meeting, although over two hundred people had expressed an interest in joining this multi-disciplinary interest group. Primary interest areas were educational needs of the group, advocacy for the handicapped population and dissemination of information. Many schools and agencies in the Pacific Northwest are now involved in teaching Blissymbolics as well as utilizing other non-vocal communication systems and devices. The formation of this group represents an attempt to combine forces and to share information. Anyone wishing additional information about the Pacific Northwest Non-Vocal Communication Group should contact Dr. Bruce Gans, Children's Orthopedic Hospital and Medical Center, 4800 Sand Point Way N.E., Box C-5371, Seattle, Washington 98105.

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#### INTEGRATION OF SYMBOL USERS INTO REGULAR SCHOOL SYSTEMS

By: Dale Sutherland  
Calgary, Alberta

Opposition to new programmes or ideas is not a new phenomena and in the case of the application of Blissymbolics to the physically handicapped population, skeptics have been voicing their opinions since its original conception. It seems that the advantages which arise from the organization and comprehensiveness of a meaning-based communication medium require frequent repetition in persuading speaking persons to keep open minds. Those of us in various professions who are involved with the application and instruction of Blissymbolics need not be reminded that communication is the dominant influence in the personal life of every individual and those who lack this skill are always forced to sit passively on the sidelines.

I have been living in Calgary for a year and a half now. Prior to my arrival, there was very little use of Blissymbolics. At the Alberta Children's Hospital, approximately ten children were introduced to symbols in September, 1976; ranging



in age from pre-schoolers to fourteen years. Each child was treated on an individual basis several times a week. My case load gradually expanded and I began working with adults (both stroke patients and older cerebral palsy persons), and autistic children. In November, 1976, a teacher from Alberta Children's Hospital School attended an Elementary Workshop in Toronto. Interest in symbols really began to mushroom. Eventually, a proposal was submitted to the Calgary Board of Education and the Alberta Children's Hospital Administration to establish a classroom for symbol users. The proposal was accepted and six symbol children began school together in September, 1977.

The Bliss Symbol programme has grown much faster than I ever anticipated. At the present time there are approximately forty to fifty children and adults using symbols in various programmes throughout the city. As I stated earlier, all children were treated on an individual basis, however, it is inevitable that some of the symbol users will reach a level of proficiency which enables them to integrate into the regular school system. Recently I have received a great deal of opposition to Bliss Symbols per se and their applicability to use in the classroom. I would be most appreciative of any advice or suggestions from those of you who have dealt with this issue of integration.

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CHARLES BLISS STRIKES AGAIN

By: Joan Hambly  
Regina, Saskatchewan

By the time September came around, my school had been in operation for two weeks. The excitement of a new school year had passed and we were settling in to the routine events of each school day. Patty, who at that time was using a 200 symbol board, seemed very restless and unhappy. Patty is usually a happy, chipper person and so she had the staff baffled. Then her parents left on a four-week holiday and that was the straw that broke the camel's back!

Patty is only seven-years old and became fairly homesick during those four weeks. It was not evident in the usual manner - crying, inappropriate behaviour. No, Patty just became quite displeased with many things around her. One day during class, she just refused to contribute anything to the topic. I asked her if she wanted to work with symbols that day and she replied, "No". I continued and explained to her that without help and guidance, she would never be able to use the 400 board which was soon to be hers. She did not seem to care at all about the symbols, the 400 board, nor using them any further for communication purposes.

I was lost. Up to this point in time she had loved her symbols and used them well. She had been an extremely hard-working student who wanted to learn more and more each day. So I thought about my next step and decided to ask her if she wanted her board anymore. Her reply was, "no". I remember a shiver of panic running through me. Then the thought entered my head that maybe she had forgotten what it was like to try and communicate in the days before symbols. I agreed to her wishes and removed the symbol board.

During the next four days, Patty was asked once or twice a day if she would like her board to help her describe what she was trying to tell us. Each time her answer was, "No". Plus, during symbol classes she asked to remain in the playroom.

It was at that time that I read the article about Charles Bliss in the September, 1977 issue of the Reader's Digest. Since I had been in the Toronto area and met the children and adults mentioned, my class decided to sit down as a group and read the article together.

Well, as I said at the time, "Charles Bliss strikes again!" By the time I had finished reading the story and talking about all the symbol users in Toronto, Patty decided that she wanted her symbol board back, and then explained how excited she was about it all!

Since then things have been rolling along quite smoothly. Patty is on her 400 board and she has now begun the "Mr. Mugs" reading series.

I think the moral of this story is that instructors should never get so involved with their own work and striving for continued success, that they forget that children have their own "up" and "down" days like all people.

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#### IDEAS FROM OTTAWA

By: Anne Warrick  
Ottawa, Ontario.

A few comments for the Newsletter. The first idea is so simple that I'm sure others are using it, and yet I haven't seen it mentioned before.

Quite a while ago, the mother of one of our finger pointing symbol users was mentioning the frustrations of always having to run over and finger read his message whilst she was in the middle of preparing a meal and coping with the other family members in the busy after-school period. Consequently, I spent much time thinking about this and finally a suggestion from Sweden was tried, and has been very successful. The child's symbol tray was covered with MacTac and sealed over a thin piece of metal sheeting. The child was then given a package of magnetised numbers. On the first word of his sentence, he places the No. 1 magnet, on the second word the No. 2 magnet and so on. Once his sentence is complete, he calls his mother, who now comes to the symbol board, picks off the numbers in the correct sequence 1-9 and reads the sentence in order. Thus a "memory" has been built into the board.

This process has also been useful for correcting sentence structure. I have not tried having the child make 2 or 3 sentences but presumably if the child was given the magnetised numbers in groups of red, blue, green, etc., various sentence sets could be made, until one particularly well used symbol got crowded out!

We are experimenting with the prototype of a lightweight symbol (Etran) tray. The tray is built as two hinged trays, which fold and clip together to make one unit for handling. Between the two trays an Etran frame is hinged over a piece of wooden dowling - thus the frame can be raised and lowered easily. The child's symbol display is placed facing him on the tray which is attached by runners to the arms of the wheelchair in the usual manner. The second tray is then prepared with the symbols on the underside and facing away from the child. Instructions as to the use and coding of the child's symbol display are also written on this board.



The second tray now lifts up, over, and downwards towards the child's feet. The symbol display and instruction are now facing the "listener". Finally, the Etran frame is raised and the required numbers, colours, etc., are placed around the frame on stickers - depending on the child's coding system. The unit has a carrying handle. When the unit is placed folded on the wheelchair - the symbols at that time being enclosed in the folded trays - it provides a good surface for working, typing, feeding, etc.

Similar trays can be bought from EDUCO TOYS, 175B Britannia Road, OTTAWA, Ontario. K2B 5X1. Phone: Area Code 613-828-6986. The price is \$65.00 plus mailing charges. Symbol displays are not included. Overall size 19" x 25", weight-max. 8 lbs.

Cut out wooden symbols for toys, stencils, etc., are also available from Educo Toys. They are 3/4" varnished plywood and 6" in size. Each package contains - square, action indicator, evaluation and reference dot for vocabulary expansion plus the symbol for legs, hand, eye, ear, nose, mouth, heart, boy, girl, man, woman, chair, toilet, bed, table, house, flower, tree, sun, fish, animal, bird, car, boat, water, fire, earth, sky, clothing, container, arrow. This item has proven expensive to make - after 4 estimates the cheapest price available, with no profit to us, is \$75.00 per set. We are presently developing, also through Educo-Toys, to have the same symbols made in plastic at substantially less cost. I hope that these will be available shortly.

During the past few months, a number of severely handicapped symbol users from this Centre have been hospitalized for surgical procedures requiring some post-operative time in the Intensive Care Unit and also in a prone lying position. What to do! The taking of fluids we managed by syringe and tubing but what of communication? Symbols of the child's basic needs were written on large cards and placed around the bed head board in a Etran type display. Large "Yes" and "No" cards were put on the right and left hand bedrails at eye level for the old 20 questions routine. A perspex display was made - again for limited vocabulary for holding between patient and nurse when sidelying was allowed. When the child was returned to the ward the more usual finger scanning with 'Yes' and 'No' responses from the child was used with a portable display. Finally, they were back into their wheelchairs and to their usual display and access. I would really appreciate any suggestions anyone can offer regarding the care of the symbol user in critical situations. Could someone please write to the next issue of Newsletter.

Finally, thank you to everyone who spends time in writing to, and producing the newsletter, We, in Ottawa, always look forward to the next copy.

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